



## Greater Kansas City Chamber of Commerce 2024 KANSAS PUBLIC POLICY AGENDA

*Approved by the KC Chamber Board, November 13, 2023*

The Greater Kansas City Chamber of Commerce believes state government plays a vital role in setting the stage for community development, business competitiveness, small business growth, and employment-generating investment by the private sector to promote economic growth. The Greater Kansas City Chamber of Commerce, representing 2,000 employers in the bistate region, calls on policymakers to work across geographic and party lines to plan for inclusive growth; invest in transformational regional projects such as the 2026 World Cup; advance the prosperity, health, and security of all residents and workforce; including Medicaid expansion and expanded support for public education; and work to improve opportunities for local control. We advocate for solutions-focused dialogue and civil discourse as legislators deliberate the most effective policy to advance our state and grow opportunities for its citizens.

### PROSPEROUS ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

The KC Chamber supports a pro-business environment, the reduction of red-tape, and investment in effective and efficient economic development programs and financing tools that will help the Kansas City area grow and remain globally competitive. The Chamber takes the following positions:

- Support Federal and State economic development investment and financing tools, including programs such as Opportunity Zones and STAR Bonds and oppose additional transfers from the Economic Development Incentives Fund (EDIF).
- Support state investment in Kansas City's role as host of the 2026 World Cup.
- Support the pro-business, equitable distribution of recovery and relief funds.
- Support measures to expand access to capital for small business and businesses in LMI communities, including Right to Start policies that grow entrepreneurial capacity for diverse, and emerging businesses.
- Support measures to enhance the Kansas City Animal Health Corridor and National Security Crossroads initiative, and commercialization opportunities stemming from NBAF.
- Support responsible taxation policies to:
  - Support tax certainty for employers and employees regarding remote work allowing employers to determine the location where remote work is deemed to be performed, and advocate for balanced taxation and fiscally responsible measures that don't eliminate critical infrastructure and safety-net investments.
  - Support local control and taxing and spending authority of local governments.
  - Oppose expansion of sales tax on professional and labor services.

### BUSINESS-FRIENDLY CLIMATE

In an increasingly complex 21<sup>st</sup> century economy, the KC Chamber calls for a climate of legislative and regulatory predictability, and efficiency allowing businesses to plan for growth and expansion. This includes supporting:

- Added protections for employees based on sexual orientation, gender identity or expression and opposing legislation that enables discriminatory policies of any kind.
- Measures to improve Kansas's legal climate supporting the integrity of the workers compensation system, civil justice reform and opposing legislation that would create or expand liability.
- Equitable and data-informed policies that reduce violent crime in Kansas's metropolitan areas

- Policies to secure and enforce the right to vote and make voting safe and accessible for all voters while maintaining election integrity.
- Adequate funding of the judiciary and a non-partisan, non-election process for selecting quality judges

### ***Military Affairs***

The KC Chamber supports stable funding for the military services at a level that maintains end strength necessary to ensure our forces' readiness and lethality; efforts to increase the quality of life for Service members and their families, including more opportunities for spousal employment and better connection to jobs for those who transition out of the military; and investments in infrastructure and capacity at our region's installations and within the defense industrial base.

## **WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT AND EDUCATION**

### ***Early Childhood Education & Child Care***

Access to quality child care and early education continues to be a dominant barrier to attracting new and returning members to the workforce. The KC Chamber supports efforts to expand access to, and affordability of, quality child care and early education. This includes supporting:

- Measures to improve recruitment and retention of quality educators who prepare the early childhood workforce.
- Increasing the supplemental allocation to support Pre-K and efforts to expand home visiting programs.
- Child care access for late-evening/early-morning shift workers.
- Infant/toddler special education.

### ***K-12 Education***

The KC Chamber believes the success of all students and our community requires a high-quality public education system with sufficient funding including adequately and competitively compensates teachers and education support staff, and keeping data-informed high standards for transparency, performance, growth, and outcomes aligned with community and workforce needs. The Chamber supports measures to enhance teacher preparation, recruitment, and retention and advocates for local authority of school boards and non-partisan school board elections. The Chamber takes the following positions:

- Support measures to assist and incentivize competency-based education to align with local workforce needs.
- Support measures to increase dual credit/dual enrollment programs.
- Support policies designed to improve climate and culture in the classroom.
- Oppose diverting federal or state funds from public schools including withholding, tuition tax credits, scholarship tax credits, and vouchers.
- Support policies and funding that enhance much needed behavioral and mental health initiatives in schools.
- Fund special education at constitutional levels.

### ***Higher Education & Post-Secondary Opportunities***

- Support for increasing current levels of state funding as requested by the Kansas Board of Regents.
- Support the state's higher education institutions and investments in significant regional higher education assets.
- Support efforts by state lawmakers to capture federal research funding for all Kansas public universities.
- Support measures to stimulate career, technical, and trade education in the state including STEAM education and workforce development initiatives.

### *Workforce Development*

- Support state investment in workforce development including programs that help increase internships, apprenticeships, workplace readiness, adult education, and workforce certification programs.
- Support policy and strategies to improve access to safe, quality, and healthy housing that is affordable to our workforce.
- Support policies that remove barriers to work and make the state and the greater Kansas City region more attractive and accessible to the immigrant workforce.
- Support workforce training, re-entry programs, and other criminal justice initiatives that encourage returning citizens and other at-risk citizens to become employed and reduce recidivism.
- Support measures to expand bistate training, certification, reciprocity, and credentialing opportunities.

### **HEALTHY COMMUNITIES**

There is an undeniable link between the financial health of our businesses and the overall health and wellness of our workforce. The KC Chamber supports measures to advance quality healthcare and address social determinants of health. This includes supporting telehealth; wellness initiatives that ensure sufficient funding for providers; and the improvement, collection, and access of public health data. The Chamber takes the following positions:

- Support expansion of the state's KanCare program to close the coverage gap for working Kansans and ensure adequate funding for healthcare providers serving the uninsured population in Kansas.
- Support increased state investment to maintain the stature of University of Kansas School of Medicine and the University of Kansas Cancer Center.
- Support investments in a strong state and local public health infrastructure to ensure that communities are protected from, and able to respond to public health threats.
- Support the appropriation of opioid settlement dollars awarded to the state to support behavioral health needs, including increased mental health services, substance abuse treatment and harm reduction programs.
- Support increased funding and access to mental health services, including additional beds at Kansas state psychiatric hospitals.
- Generally opposed to healthcare benefit mandates and provider mandates.

### **SUSTAINABLE INFRASTRUCTURE**

#### *Transportation*

The KC Chamber supports appropriate investment in all modes of transportation infrastructure throughout the region, which includes supporting:

- Effective and innovative ways to help capture federal investment.
- Funding to promote and study regional approaches to public transit and transportation planning.
- Encourage safe, efficient transportation that promotes access to regional, national, and international markets and opportunities vital to regional needs.
- Funding the upgrade of roads, highways, waterways, passenger and freight rail, and air travel in a responsible, efficient, and cost-effective manner will allow the state to meet its transportation-related quality of life priorities including safety, economic development, technological advancement, and workforce development.
- Policies that allow local and state government agencies the flexibility to use progressive and collaborative alternative delivery models for projects.

### ***Digital Equity and Broadband***

Quality and affordable broadband infrastructure is important to support business operations, enable entrepreneurs to start and grow new businesses, and help residents learn and engage in the 21<sup>st</sup> century economy. The KC Chamber supports investments in middle and last mile broadband infrastructure, digital equity, and the deployment of funding in our region through programs such as public-private partnerships including opportunities resulting from the Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act.

### ***Energy & Environment***

The KC Chamber encourages investments in renewable energy, balanced energy solutions, energy efficiency and reliability and supports policies that support public health and environmental protections that do not unduly burden industry, business, and Kansas residents. The Chamber also supports policies that will not eliminate energy options for local consumers or mandate fuel sources or energy-specific technologies. The Chamber supports the development and voluntary use of affordable and reliable energy resources to deliver energy to Kansas City and other high-demand areas. The Chamber also supports transmission policies that get renewable energy to market and enable partnerships between local utilities and landowners.